**Workshop: 2011 Conference – Lights, Camera, Action!**

**Combining visual language techniques:**

Taymor uses Frida’s painting, “Self Portrait With Cropped Hair” to convey Frida’s inner feelings about Diego’s disloyalty. The cantilevered long shot of Frida drinking whilst sitting on a wooden chair conveys Frida’s emotional, dislocated state. The tilt of the camera distorts the viewer’s image, positioning the viewer to feel Frida’s pain. **This is combined with** powerful lyrical Mexican music with a lone female voice singing “La Paloma Negra” (The Black Dove) to guitar music, highlighting her desperation. During the performance of the song, sound effects of Frida viciously cutting her hair, punctuate the scene. This shows her violating her beauty in order to punish Diego who loved her long hair and punishing herself in anger and sorrow. The muted blues show her emotional distress at this point as blue is a cold unemotional colour, in direct contrast to the passionate reds Frida is seen wearing earlier in the film. **In addition**, costume has been used to show Frida rejecting the traditional Mexican costume of bright, bold colours and donning a male trouser suit which negates her sexuality. **Through all these techniques**, the viewer feels the sadness and heartache, Frida feels. The actual painting is brought to life as Frida is shown with her head tilted and looking directly at the camera, then slumping in her seat. This use of tableaux vivant is quite theatrical and is evidence of Taymor’s aesthetic. As an auteur, she is rendering Kahlo’s artwork to the viewer in her own artistic vision. Although in reality the painting was created years after Diego’s affair with her sister, Taymor uses it in a subjective way to mark Frida’s emotional turmoil.

**Close viewing of film**

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| **Technique: visual/verbal** | **Effect** | **Director’s intention/ purpose** | **Personal Response/ Judgement** |
| Crane shot of *La Casa Azul.* Camera moving down into the house/ courtyard to ground level. Men in background moving bed. Mexican music playing. Words of song in English mean: And she is the flame  That rises up  And she is a bird in flight  In the night  that catches fire  Hell is this heaven | Vibrant colours shown: particularly blue, red, green.. Establishes Mexican setting and focus on animals that pervade the house and her work: parrot, deer, peacock, monkey, puppies. Quite exotic animals. Camera movement draws viewer in to the world. Cacti abundant, as well as small statuettes showing we are in Mexico. Bed is of significance as this is how Frida will be transported and is also the place where she has been trapped. Music quite high pitched organ music after singing: surreal, suggesting something unusual is happening. | The blue house was an extraordinarily important place to Frida and was built by her father. She lived and worked there. It now is a museum to Frida and houses artifacts from her life. The setting is inextricably linked to Frida. The shot of the house combined with the music of a woman singing in Mexican establishes the mood and tone of the opening – quite serious but vibrant. All elements of the scene are reflected in Frida’s paintings. Words of song very pertinent to Frida. She is the bird who wants to be free but who is caught and suffers. Her life is “hell” due to all the pain she has endured over the years, both physical and emotional. Frida herself talks about not needing feet to be able to “fly”. Flying is a sense of freedom for her. Purpose establishes Frida’s influences in her work, her environment and Mexican culture. |  |

**Annotations:**

Colour is used with startling effect in *Frida* and is inextricably linked to Taymor’s idiograph, or personal style as a director. Kahlo, as an artist, used colour to convey her love for vibrancy, passion and life, whilst, at the same time, shocking her audience with bold contrasts of colour, many critics linking her love of colour with her heritage and culture. Taymor, similarly uses colour to convey the beauty in Kahlo’s life as well as her pain. Taymor herself says of colour, “In our culture, we think that happy and color is trivial, that black and darkness is deeper. But Nietzsche said -- which is a line that I firmly believe -- "Joy is deeper than sorrow, for all joy seeks eternity.” In the opening shots of the film, the camera sweeps down from a high angled shot of the blue house, into the courtyard. The bold blue walls combined with the luscious green of the plants, conveys the rich ‘joyful’ essence of Mexican life: a culture which has a long history and a deep affinity with bold colour. These colours seemed heightened, so intense as to even seem unreal. Taymor’s bold colour palette is furthered when we see Frida: the striking use of red in her headdress and on her dress which marks her beauty. Red is often associated with passion but also pain and blood. Through the use of bold primary colours, strong key lighting and Mexican music, we instantly link Frida to her culture and heritage, elements which infuse her artistic work. Both Taymor and Frida are artists, creating a truth about beauty and art in visual genres: film and painting. Colour therefore becomes emblematic of that exploration into truth and beauty.